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THE REAL WORLD DOES NOT TAKE FLIGHT

The images in this exhibition are those of a dream I had three months after the death of my mother. The setting was London, a city I had visited twice, many years apart: once in the summer and once in the autumn. The summer visit, a long time ago, impressed me deeply, but London appeared to me as a city full of transients: people on their way to somewhere else. I was struck by a sense of holiday and decided to come back at a more sober time, perhaps in the autumn or winter. Years later I fulfilled that promise and returned to London in October. It was a melancholy time of my life, and this extraordinary city suited my temperament at that moment. I had a chance to savour it alone, without the interference of summer crowds. It rained most of the time, and this fog-enveloped place had a mesmerising effect.

I would wake up at 4 a.m. and start exploring an hour later. The city was still asleep except for a few street sweepers. I could barely see their moving silhouettes emerging from the morning mist. By seven o'clock the city was beginning to come to life: the fog began to lift, and the spell was broken. The hours between five and seven were hypnotic – it was not of this world, but it belonged to me, powerful and soundless, forever burned into my subconscious.

Now, years later, those haunting moments re-emerge in the form of a dream. The place was London and the time, that magic time of autumn. The dream that surfaced from the fog, appearing and disappearing, was a full scenario following the same sequence as these images. I was impressed with the somnambulistic, almost underwater quality of the dream. I thought about it for a while and then went ahead with the everydayness of my life. A week later, the dream recurred. This time I wrote it down in my notebook. Not a day passed without me thinking about it. It became an obsession.

Why was I dreaming this dream?

Who is the black nun?

Who is the man?

Being of analytical nature, I knew the dream was symbolic. The existential aspect of the symbolism was not entirely foreign to me. You go through life alone; the people you meet are narcissistic images of yourself; relationships don't last; affairs are mutual delusions and distractions from death. You end up having breakfast alone. You take the boat to nowhere, knock on the door, and confront yourself. Ultimately, you are responsible to yourself, for yourself. Then darkness. I perceive the dream as one of frustrated hopes, lost illusions, and the inevitability of the human condition.

This was my journey into the subconscious – a land of was, is and will be, illuminating a hidden crystallised truth, a moment of time lost, perhaps a moment of time that never happened. Or perhaps even a time to come: merging and recording images forever young, never to age, reflecting the anxiety of all time by means of flashbacks and flash-forwards. I found myself in the essence of time –and at the same time I was outside of it, suspended, looking into the abyss.

In my dream, a man is following a nun through London, starting at the door of a small building in Bloomsbury. Both rush into the Victoria and Albert Museum and he watches her standing for an especially long time in front of the Scott Paper Company Dress. Then, both are again walking fast on the street. He is behind her, but the dream has sudden, incongruous breaks: like bumps sewing together a road, or bridges stitching a river. For once, they are talking, and she tells him her name: Mo-Po – short for Mother Paulette – and that her mission is helping teenagers get gender re-assignment surgery. After another break, they are again in front of the dress at the museum but this time she is speaking about botanical illustrations of insect metamorphosis that show all stages in one single drawing. Then they are inside a hospital where she hands him files with names. Inside there are only pictures of herself but younger, in Jamaica, working naked on what looks like moiré silk. In one picture, she is pressing her body with all her strength against a machine making her breasts disappear. In the next picture, we can see she has printed a big dark blue square. The photos transition or evolve into drawings – examples as she describes them – of overlaid almost identical patterns. They are then sitting, and later walking again. He loses contact with her and then resumes following her secretly through the streets of London.

Rodrigo Hernández



Rodrigo Hernandez, a Mexican artist based in Lisbon, works with drawing, painting, sculpture and installation to overlap cultural narratives and histories. The environments that Hernandez conjures in his shows are arrived at intuitively, fluidly bringing together media and form. Each work takes inspiration from stories that might be hard to intuit in the end exhibition, but nonetheless adorn his practice with a structure. Among the works Hernandez will include in his solo exhibition at Pivô is a mural that draws on the moiré pattern of paper dresses the artist saw at London's Victoria and Albert Museum, a sculpture which references Swiss naturalist Maria Sibylla Merian's scientific drawings depicting the metamorphosis of insects and a dream encounter with a catholic nun in London. The artist offers the following obituary, taken from a British newspaper, as another inspiration.

Mail & Guardian

Saturday 4 November 2017

Obituary: Mother Paulette Thomas

Mother Paulette Thomas, who has died aged 76, was nicknamed the 'patron saint of trans people'. The Catholic nun defied church orthodoxy by offering moral support and practical help to young trans people across Britain, gaining widespread media attention after she spoke out against the sacking of a young transgender automotive engineer, a case that went to the high court in 1977, challenging the limited scope of the recently inaugurated sex discrimination laws.

In 1972 Mother Paulette, known by the nickname 'Po', was volunteering at a homeless shelter with several of her fellow nuns from the International Congregation of Penitent Sisters, an open order based in North London. Through this charity work, Po met Penelope, a teenage trans girl, who had turned to sex work. "She was beautiful" Po recalled. "I wanted to help her because it is my calling, but I also liked her. She was intelligent and amusing. We spoke of her fears, her occasional doubts." Po found Penelope a place to live, encouraging her away from prostitution and back into education. "I wanted her to be settled so she could make the decision to complete gender reassignment." Penelope introduced Po to a world that, at that time, was more closed than any nunnery. On several occasions the nun, dressed in lay clothing, visited Lightnings, a bar situated on an otherwise quiet street in Chelsea which hosted weekly discos and provided a safe enclave for trans people and those who cross dressed. "My fellow sisters were aghast when I told them where I had been. My superiors tried to have me posted overseas. Yet I knew the body in sufferance was at the heart of Jesus's teaching. Like Him, these women's suffering ended when they were reborn."

By the time union officials at the British Leyland car plant in Cowley organized a walk-out in support of Melanie James, a 19 year-old apprentice engineer who had been fired after a mandatory medical had revealed her birth sex to be male, Mother Paulette was well versed in the discrimination faced by Britain's trans community. Facing up to a hostile media, the sister stood on the picket line outside the factory and sat in court for the duration of the legal battle. The action brought on behalf of Melanie James was ultimately unsuccessful, but it started a national conversation on a subject that had long been taboo.

Paulette Marie Thomas was born in 1941 in Kingston, Jamaica, the daughter of Errol Thomas, a local entomologist, and Meredith Campbell, who worked in a small clothing factory. In December 1947 Errol noticed an advertisement in the Jamaica Gleaner offering a ticket to Britain for the half price fare of £28. The Commonwealth passengers onboard the Empire Windrush were welcomed to the UK to aid the country's post war recovery. On 21 June the following year Paulette and her family were among the 539 Jamaicans who disembarked in Tilbury Dock after a month of sailing, having picked up passengers in Cuba, Mexico and Bermuda along the way.

Po's family settled in north London, the girl first attending St Aloysius' primary school followed by Our Lady's Convent High School. Errol and Meredith attended Mass every Sunday, but Po was the first of the family to take a vow. In 1959, Po began her training, joining the Congregation of Penitent Sisters in 1960. Quiet in her studies her superiors remember the novice as shy and unassuming though passionate that religion should serve a pastoral purpose. She began to work with the homeless in 1962, often walking an hour into central London to volunteer for the late shifts in the city's soup kitchens and walking back in the early morning.

Po did not enjoy the limelight that followed the James case, though she understood that her voice might aid societal acceptance of the burgeoning trans community. In the 1990s she retained a lower profile, living with her order in Tottenham and devoting more time to personal prayer. In 1998 she wrote a theological essay for the Tablet that caused some controversy, linking the trans subject with transubstantiation. In 2001 she appeared in 'Changing Lives', a 2001 BBC documentary that shadowed the doctors and patients of a gender reassignment clinic for teenagers that Mother Paulette was attached to. "Po's understanding of trans is deep: she knows it is not about changing something, but accepting that you can be more than one thing at any given time, that trans subjects are multilayered, nothing is either/or" one 16-year-old noted of her mentor. "She is a saint; a funny, brave saint."

Mother Paulette Thomas, religious sister and activist, born 1 September 1941, died 27 October 2017

Oliver Basciano





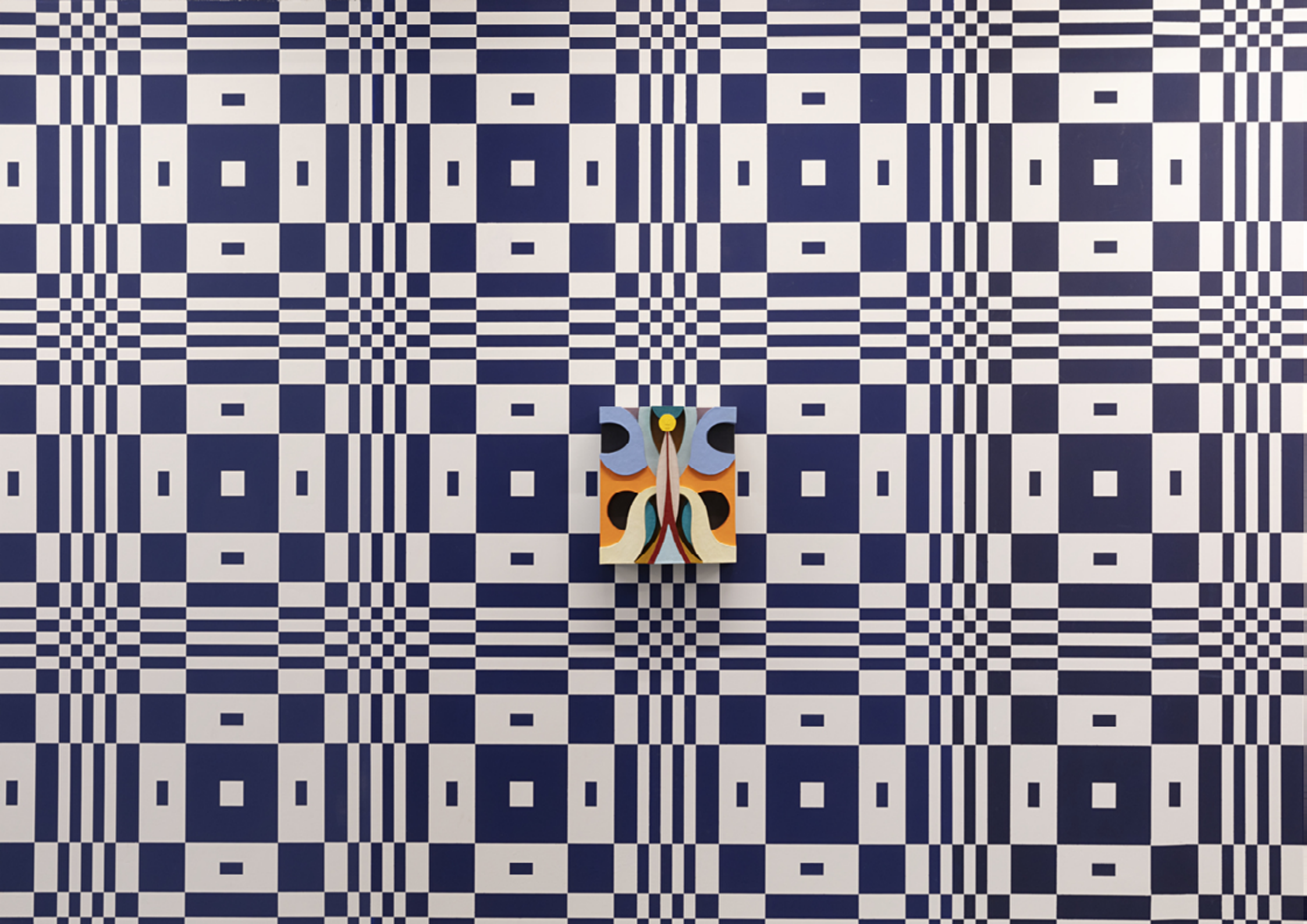




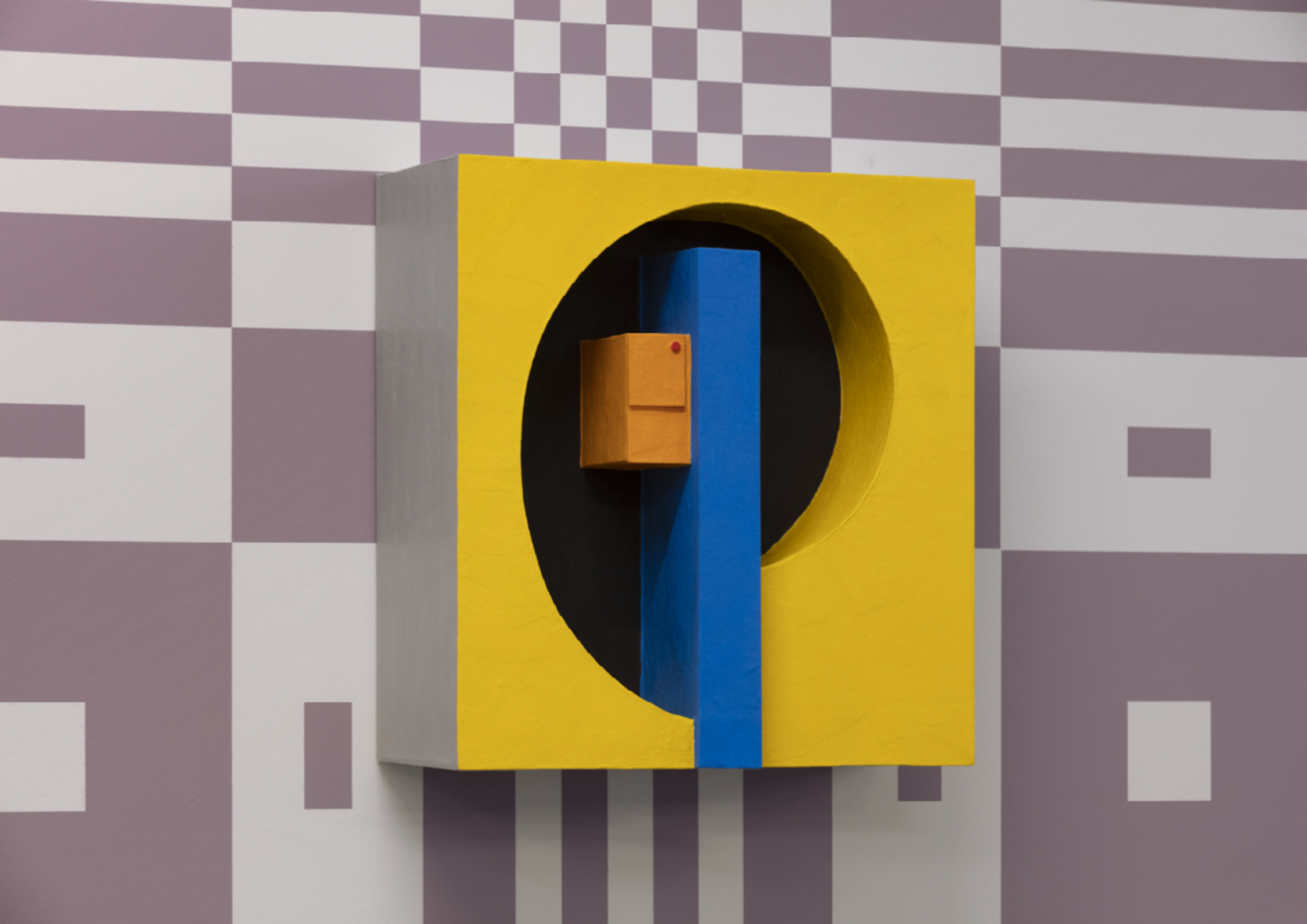




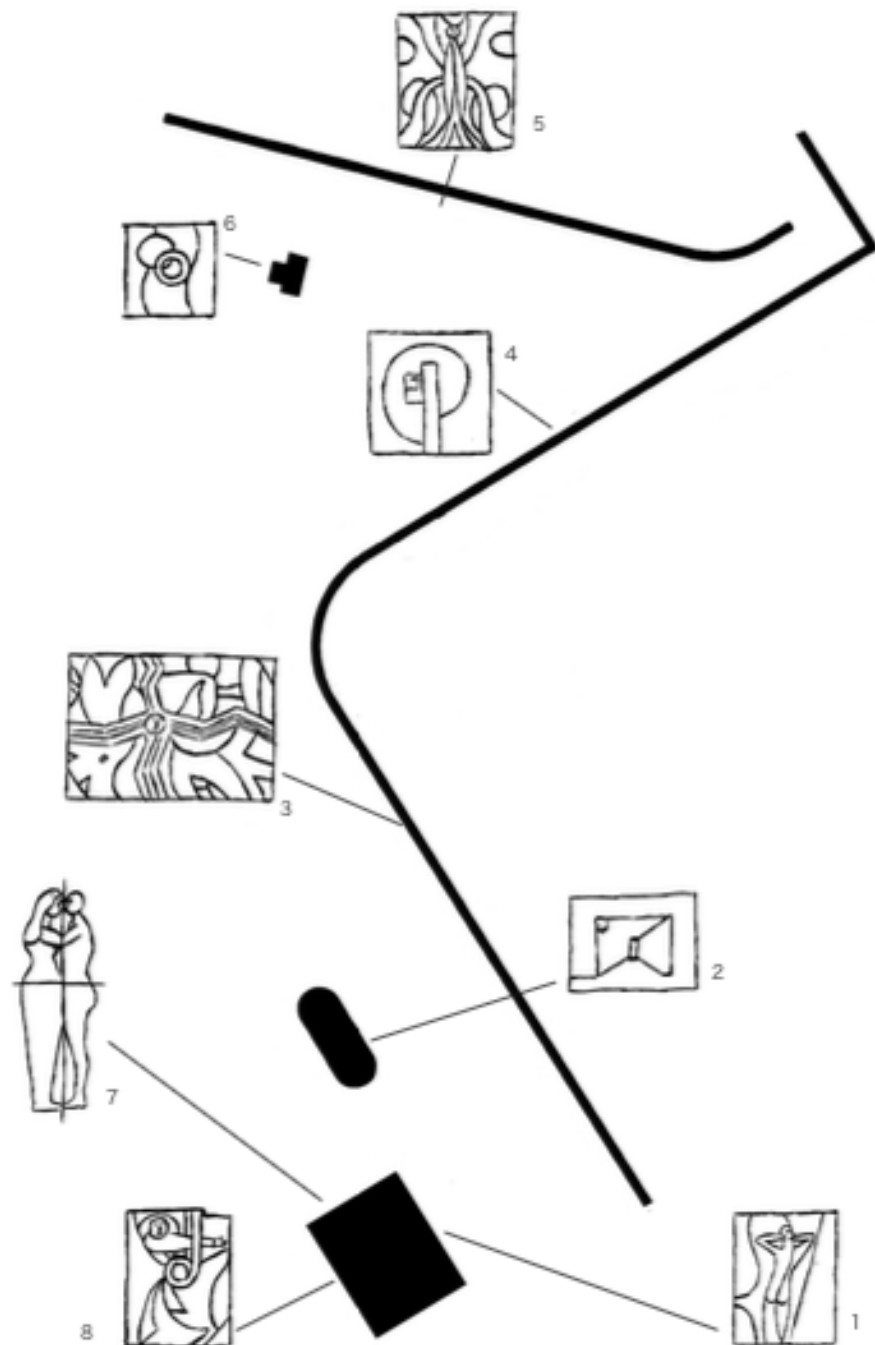












1 *The Possibility*, 2018

Cardboard, papier mâché, acrylic paint, oil paint
43x35x14,5 cm

2 *My head left the axis*, 2018

Cardboard, papier mâché, acrylic paint, oil paint
32x42x49 cm

3 *Alive*, 2018

Cardboard, papier mâché, acrylic paint, oil paint
56x81x21,5 cm

4 *Why this specific self?*, 2018

Cardboard, papier mâché, acrylic paint, oil paint
42,5x43x20 cm

5 *We, too, can divide ourselves*, 2018

Cardboard, papier mâché, acrylic paint, oil paint
47x43x9 cm

6 *De-trans-visibility*, 2018

Cardboard, papier mâché, acrylic paint, oil paint
31x30,8x14,5 cm

7 *These cells*, 2018

Cardboard, wood papier mâché, acrylic paint, oil paint
Variable dimensions

8 *Elsewhere*, 2018

Cardboard, papier mâché, acrylic paint, oil paint
50 x 42 x 12 cm

9 *Field of Flowers*, 2018

Latex paint on wall
Variable dimensions
Based on the patterns of the Scott Paper Company Dress, 1966

All works courtesy of the artist and Galeria Madragoa, Lisbon

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